

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 25, 2005

The Honorable Michael Leavitt
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Leavitt:

In 1992, the National Cancer Institute (NCI) established the Specialized Programs of Research Excellence (SPOREs), dedicated to translational research. The SPOREs have been responsible for many important developments in the diagnosis and treatment of cancer, bringing us closer to the NCI's goal of eliminating suffering and death due to cancer by 2015.

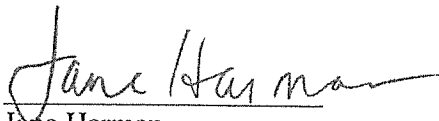
Translational research is aimed at finding diagnostics and therapies for individual cancers with a view to bringing this research from the laboratory to bedside in the quickest time possible. The SPORE program is the largest program within NCI that operates with this goal. When the program was launched in 1992, there were 8 SPOREs; there are now 61 SPOREs for 14 cancer sites, including breast, prostate, lung, gastrointestinal, ovarian, brain, skin, head and neck SPOREs. They have been responsible for 210 clinical interventions.

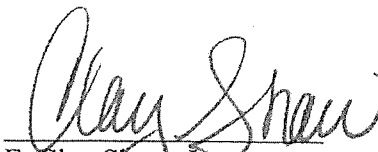
We are concerned that recently announced changes to NCI's translational research programs put this dedication of spirit and ingenuity in jeopardy. The anticipated changes include reducing the guaranteed funding period from five to three years. It may also result in the reduction of the number of SPOREs, dramatically impacting the most underfunded cancers, such as lung, pancreatic, and ovarian cancer.

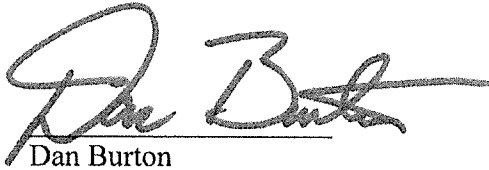
We encourage the NCI to review the SPORE program with a full acknowledgement of its merits, and to engage in active discussions with those most directly affected by any changes made to the program. We also encourage the NCI to make a specific commitment to the SPORE program, and to expand funding for translational research programs.

Translational research has an immediate, tangible impact on improving the lives of cancer patients throughout our country. As long as there are Americans who suffer from this terrible disease, translational research should remain a component of the federal government's overall strategy to combat cancer.

Sincerely,


Jane Harman
Member of Congress

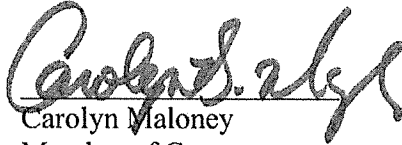

E. Clay Shaw, Jr.
Member of Congress



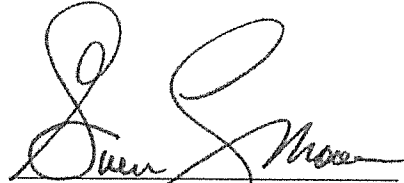
Dan Burton
Member of Congress



John A. Culberson
Member of Congress



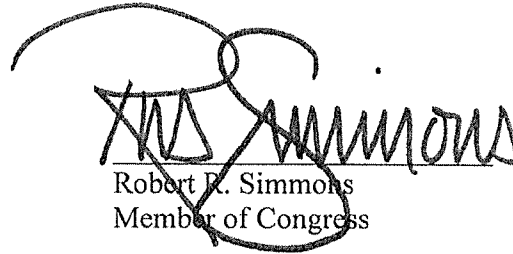
Carolyn Maloney
Member of Congress



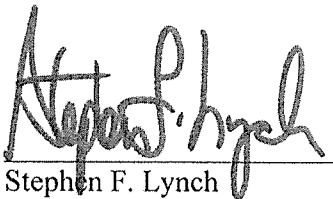
Gwen S. Moore
Member of Congress



Martin Olav Sabo
Member of Congress



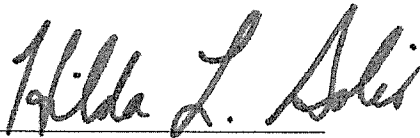
Robert R. Simmons
Member of Congress



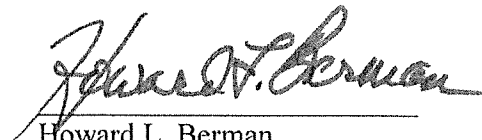
Stephen F. Lynch
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Henry Waxman
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Hilda L. Solis
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Member of Congress

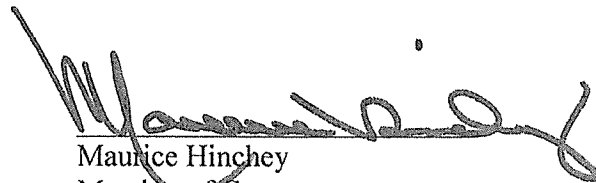


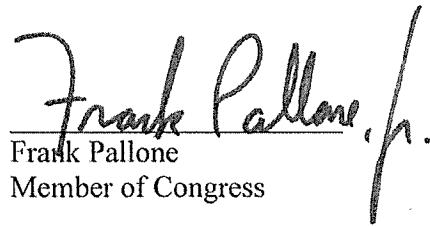
Michael R. McNulty
Member of Congress





Collin Peterson
Member of Congress



Raúl Grijalva
Member of Congress

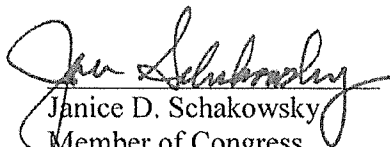

Maurice Hinchey
Member of Congress

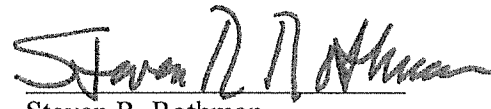

Frank Pallone
Member of Congress

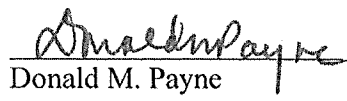

Gene Green
Member of Congress

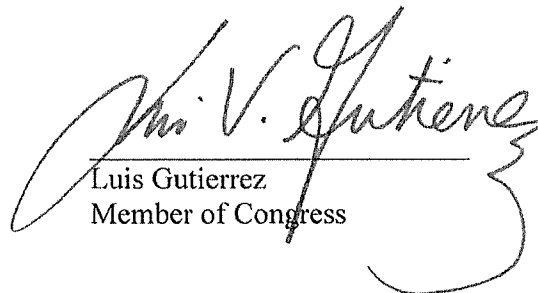

Jim Cooper
Member of Congress

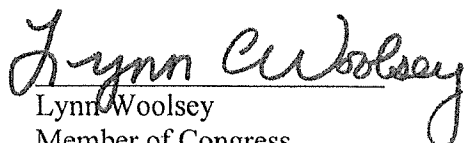

Tom Lantos
Member of Congress



Janice D. Schakowsky
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Steven R. Rothman
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Donald M. Payne
Member of Congress


Luis Gutierrez
Member of Congress


Lynn Woolsey
Member of Congress


Joe Baca
Member of Congress

Cc: Elias A. Zerhouni, M.D., Director National Institute of Health
Andrew C. Von Eschenbach, M.D., Director National Cancer Institute, Acting
Director Food and Drug Administration
John Niederhuber, M.D., Acting Director National Cancer Institute